



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
**Commission on Children**



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
Public Hearing  
February 24, 2009

Testimony Submitted by Elizabeth C. Brown  
Legislative Director

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Committee. My name is Elizabeth C. Brown, Legislative Director for the Commission on Children. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of SB 633, An Act Establishing A Mentoring Program for Certain High School and College Students.

The bill seeks to expand and build on the successful Developing Tomorrow's Professionals Program developed and implemented by the State Department of Education in conjunction with Higher Education. This program is a bright light in a persistent climate of academic failure for so many of our urban youth. The Program is a carefully constructed program of training, instruction and support services designed to address the needs of young men of color, Black and Hispanic who experience the highest incidence of school failure and incarceration. The program provides training, experiences and associations leading to academic achievement, four-year college matriculations, retention and graduation.

In this time of extreme economic hardship, this is a low cost program that leverages the resources of the community and the private sector. It utilizes the vast resources of Higher Education and makes a direct linkage between high expectations for a successful future and a college education. Urban youth are exposed to university campus and involved in constructive activities with high achieving professional role models. The most important and impressive aspect of the Program is that it shows results.

The Program has only one criterion- a willingness to participate and a desire to be successful. Of the 59 students in the Program, all are still on track for graduation and seniors in the program all graduated from high school and over half have gone on to college. This Program is primary prevention and is a sound investment in our most precious resource, our youth. The alternative for these youth is school failure, low wage jobs, and too often prison. The Commission urges support for this program and a reallocation of crisis spending in Juvenile Justice to support this alternative. Thank you for your consideration of this important educational policy.